



News Release

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Immunization rates for young Washington kids improve over last year

Pertussis vaccination still low and concerning in light of recent epidemic

OLYMPIA — Immunization rates for Washington toddlers increased from last year, according to the latest Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Immunization Survey.

The survey says 71 percent of kids under three years old in our state got a series of recommended vaccines in 2013. The state's rate for the same series of vaccines in 2012 was 65 percent.

Although rates have improved, they're still below the [Healthy People 2020 goal](#) of 80 percent, leaving many kids unprotected.

For all vaccines counted, rates increased across the board except for DTaP, the vaccine that prevents pertussis (whooping cough). This is especially concerning because of our state's whooping cough epidemic in 2012. This disease goes in cycles and tends to reappear about every three to five years. California had an epidemic in 2010 and is dealing with another one now. Idaho is also dealing with whooping cough outbreaks. Encouraging whooping cough vaccination during times when there's not a major outbreak or an epidemic can help stop or slow a future outbreak.

"Even though our state's whooping cough epidemic is over, we still have cases and this disease will always be in our communities," said State Health Officer Dr. Kathy Lofy. "We mustn't let our guard down when it comes to whooping cough. This and other vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles, are a plane ride away."

Immunization rates for DTaP vaccine decreased 4 percent from last year. Young kids need five doses of this vaccine to be fully protected since immunity from whooping cough may wear off over time.

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Our state's rates for the Hib vaccine, which protects against diseases such as meningitis caused by the Hib bacteria, and the birth dose of hepatitis B vaccine exceeded national rates. Still, that rate didn't meet state or national goals. Immunization rates for the vaccines that prevent polio, chickenpox, and measles exceeded the state and national goals of 90 percent. This is good news given the measles outbreaks in our state and in many parts of the country this year. Measles is very contagious – more than 90 percent of people must be vaccinated to stop it from spreading in our communities.

The challenge is to improve these rates to keep our communities protected. The state health department will continue partnerships with health care providers, health plans, local public health agencies, and parents to support kids getting the right immunizations at the right time. Very few kids are completely unvaccinated, but some parents choose to skip or delay getting their child some vaccines, which leaves kids at risk for serious diseases.

Washington provides all recommended vaccines at no cost for kids through age 18, and vaccines are available from health care providers across the state. Although health care providers may charge an office-visit fee and an administration fee for the vaccine, a family that can't afford to pay can ask that the administration fee be waived. Contact the [local health agency in your area](#) or the [Family Health Hotline](#) at 1-800-322-2588 for help finding a provider or immunization clinic. Adults can check the [Vaccine Finder](#).

More information on immunization is on the [Department of Health](#) website. The [National Immunization Survey](#) is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. County-level data are not included in the survey.

The [Department of Health website](#) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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